Published and Copyright (c) 1999 - 2010
All Rights Reserved

Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Fred Horvat

To subscribe to A-ONE, change e-mail addresses, or unsubscribe, log on to our website at: www.atarinews.org and click on "Subscriptions".
OR subscribe to A-ONE by sending a message to: dpj@atarinews.org and your address will be added to the distribution list.
To unsubscribe from A-ONE, send the following: Unsubscribe A-ONE
Please make sure that you include the same address that you used to subscribe from.

To download A-ONE, set your browser bookmarks to one of the following sites:

http://people.delphiforums.com/dpj/a-one.htm
Now available:
http://www.atarinews.org

Visit the Atari Advantage Forum on Delphi!
http://forums.delphiforums.com/atari/

=~=~=~=

A-ONE #1219 05/07/10

~ Laptop Case: No Spying ~ People Are Talking! ~ Browser Battles Rage!
~ StarCraft II in July! ~ Nintendo 3DS Rumors! ~ New Broadband Regs?
~ Sex Ads Still Thriving ~ IE No Longer Dominant! ~ Dark Wii Launched!

~ Get Rid of the Clutter ~ Play Game, Win Million ~ .XXX Domain Debate!

-* World Cybersecurity Summit! *-
-* Is There Really A Cyberwar Going On *-
-* Social Networking Poses Some Serious Risks *-

=~=~=~=

->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Many thanks to those of you who have inquired about my recent health issues, and sent well-wishes. All were appreciated. It's good to be home, out of the hospital - even if I was only in for a day. I still have some tests to undergo next week, with a follow-up with a cardiologist, so things are still unclear as to what medical problems I may have. I've returned to work, and feeling fine. And with some really nice weather lately, I hope to be medically "cleared" to return to my second job at the golf course for the summer. I'll cut my hours at the other job and try to work a schedule that will fit my needs. And if I'm lucky, I might get a chance to play a little golf this year!

I have to say, this "little" health episode scared the heck out of me. Thoughts of "heart attack" raced through my mind as I tried to ascertain what was wrong with me. It was bad enough to put a look on my face that as soon as my wife saw it, she was getting dressed to take me to the emergency room. I was in no mood to even debate the issue, much less consider not going.

I'm guessing that whatever it was that I had suffered wasn't too serious, or I'd probably have stayed admitted for awhile longer, had more tests, and seen a cardiologist. At least I'm hoping that that logic makes some sense. At least I'm having additional testing to try and determine what happened, and if any damage was done to my heart. I should know more by this time next week.

So, in the meantime, I'm not over-doing it at work, and trying to relax and remain anxiety-free for another week. We'll just have to wait and see what happens.

Until next time...

=~=~=~=

PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone and again there aren't a lot of UseNet messages. I want to talk about that for a bit and then send you on your way, okay?

First of all, our buddy Fred Horvat sent the link to this story along: http://www.osnews.com/comments/23252

Under Fair Use, I quote:
"Beginning in June 2010, Microsoft will begin closing newsgroups and migrating users to Microsoft forums that include Microsoft Answers, TechNet and MSDN. This move will centralize content, make it easier for contributors to retain their influence, reduce redundancies and make content easier to find. Overall, forums offer a better spam management platform that will improve customer satisfaction by encouraging a healthy discussion space."

Basically, Microsoft is stopping its support of the UseNet in favor of venues that it has direct control over. Now, I'm not saying that their main objective is to control what people read or think (not for the purposes of this discussion, anyway), but the fact remains that fewer and fewer people are supporting NewsGroups. Personally, the only access I have to the UseNet these days is via Google Groups... and while I trust Google more than I trust Microsoft, that is only by a small margin. Even if they are 'good as gold' right now, there is nothing to say that Google might not, at some time in the future, decide to exert control over all the petabytes of information they now have access over... information that we have willingly given them access to in exchange for their search engine and their databases and their cloud computing document system. The fact that the CHOOSE not to do anything with that information right now is not a promise that they never will.

But the 'funny' thing about this is that Microsoft and Google are but the most visible examples. Websites all over the internet collect data on us every day. Amazon, CNN, WebMD... does anyone reading this think it would be hard to track what someone searches for on Wikipedia? Do you really think that a yahoo search for "gunpowder" or a Barnes and Noble search for "The Anarchist's Cookbook" is going to go unnoticed by someone or other? I mean, any one of us can set up tracking on a website (if you have a website, of course) that can tell us who visits our site (or their IP address, to be more accurate), where they came from, what search terms they used to find the site, what they did on the site and for how long... the list goes on and on... and we're just poor working slobs, not government agents with court orders or subpoenas in their pockets. And that's not even the "big" issue... the government would be concerned with ALL of us, they've got about a billion people (give or take four or five hundred million) they'd like to keep their eyes on for various reasons. Someone like Comcast or Sprint would be interested with far fewer... namely customers and potential customers. And that's the big difference. It doesn't tick the government off that they can't keep tabs on anyone they want... they can. What ticks them off is that they can't keep tabs on EVERYONE they want. Comcast and Sprint, to use the above example, wouldn't have that problem.

So what do we do? Do we stop providing the credit card info? Do we forgo the convenience of ordering things over the internet and drive to the local mall and hit the bookstore and pay only in cash and never use the coupons or 'club' cards that tell them who you are? That's why your grocery store card gets you a lower price on things, you know. Because they get to analyze your buying habits and sell, if not your information private information, at least what it takes to get you to buy something.

Unfortunately, the days of a cash-only economy are gone. There's no possibility of staying 'off the grid' these days. The best you can hope for is that there are so many people doing what you're doing that you... get lost in the crowd.

One of the other things I wanted to mention today was something that relates to the waning use of the UseNet... There was an article on slashdot.org last week about Gopher. Remember gopher? It was kind of like the WWW, but it was text-only. It was also... proprietary, if I remember correctly. Whichever university created it charged a fee (even if it was only a small one) for running a gopher server... if that's the right terminology. I remember using gopher when I first gained access to the internet... not the worldwide web, mind you, the internet. That was using my trusty Atari ST using the "TAF" distribution. Remember that? What a job to install. What a job to configure. What a job to use. But it DID give us the internet. It gave us the TCP/IP stack, the desktop, the browser and a bunch of utilities to "use" the internet. Now that I think of it, maybe it wasn't "The TAF Install"... it might have been CompuServe or Delphi or GEnie that had a 'gopher portal'. I don't remember anymore. But that's neither here nor there.

Now, as I said, gopher was not 'free'. At about the same time, the worldwide web was being born at CERN. CERN decided to make their protocol and their way of doing things free for anyone and everyone to use. True, the WWW was less structured than gopherspace, and it was much more bandwidth-intensive than gopherspace, due to the graphics involved in the former and absent in the latter. But it was free. It was 'pretty' and is wasn't all that hard to use. You could build a 'web page' in a text editor with a handful of html tags, some plain text and a couple of GIFs.

So gopher withered and died while the WWW grew and flourished.

The reason I'm mentioning this is that the slashdot.org story I mentioned was about 'gopherspace'... most of it is gone now, offline and unavailable. True, the fact that gopherspace rose and fell during the infancy of widespread internet use and before the widespread availability of broadband access for most of us, and that kept gopherspace from being the robust juggernaut that the web has become. In fact, if I interpret the story correctly, many gopher sites were lost. Many disappeared into obscurity or just plain down the drain as they were taken down by owners. But this guy (John Goerzen) decided in 2007 to collect up everything surviving in gopherspace and archive it. A monumental task, right? Well, would it surprise you to know that there are a total of about 780,000 documents that were still available when he decided to archive "everything"? Yeah, 780,000 documents. And that IS a lot... the total archive is about 40 gigabytes in size... but I would be willing to wager that much much more content than that is generated on the WWW every single day.

Mr. Goerzen is making the complete archive available for download in the hopes that someone will host it like Archive.Org archives a large percentage of the www. The compressed archive is 'only' 15 gigabytes.

Imagine. A whole 'world' of information... all of gopherspace... on only a fraction of the average home PC's hard drive. Even when uncompressed, it's still something that could fit on a cheap laptop's... or even on a netbook's hard drive. In a few years, if technology keeps progressing, you might be able to carry all of gopherspace around on a thumbdrive. Of course, by then, who knows if anyone will even care about gopherspace.

The url for the main article (not the Slashdot announcement of it) is:
http://www.boingboing.net/2010/04/29/all-of-gopherspace-a.html
Take a look if you get the chance.

Well, that's it for this week, friends and neighbors. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

=~=~=~=

->In This Week's Gaming Section - Nintendo Launches Dark Wii
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Nintendo's 3DS Rumors!
                                    StarCraft II in Summer!
                                    And more!

=~=~=~=

->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Nintendo Launches Dark Wii, Expanded Bundle in US

Nintendo Co. is trying to expand U.S. sales of the Wii by throwing in an extra game and its MotionPlus accessory for making the console's signature motion-sensing wand more precise. The company is also offering a black version of the system as an alternative to the game system's white casing.

The packages will sell for $200, which is what the Wii, bundled with "Wii Sports" and the wand, currently costs. Nintendo said on Monday that it will add "Wii Sports Resort" and the MotionPlus to the bundle. The new packages and the black Wiis will be available in the U.S. and other markets in the Americas starting Sunday.

Black Wiis have already been available in Japan and Europe, and their U.S. announcement has been expected. Nintendo, based in Japan, did not give specific pricing for the console packages outside the U.S. but said it would be comparable.

The Wii is the world's most popular video game console, its sales eclipsing both Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 3 and Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox 360. But both Sony and Microsoft are coming out with their versions of motion controllers later this year, potentially challenging the Wii's popularity.

Reggie Fils-Aime, the president of Nintendo of America, said the company

is looking to bring in consumers who've been sitting on the fence about buying a Wii. He described the new deal as a "value enhancement" rather than a price cut. "Wii Sports Resort," which comes with MotionPlus, costs $50, though some retailers offer deals for $40.

Nintendo Looks To Restore Magic with 3D Console

Nintendo on Friday brushed off suggestions its magic may be fading despite declining sales of its Wii console, as it prepares to unveil a handheld 3D device it hopes will drive a new gaming revolution.

President Satoru Iwata remained tightlipped about the much-awaited gadget, tentatively know as the "3DS", only saying it will offer a whole new gaming experience to players.

He also shrugged off suggestions that Nintendo has passed the peak of its growth after the company announced its first decline in annual profit for the first time in six years Thursday on slowing sales of its Wii and DS devices.

The maker of the hit series "Super Mario Bros" saw net profit fall 18 percent in the year to March as it cut prices of the Wii in response to competition from Sony and Microsoft in the multi-billion dollar industry.

Boasting total lifetime sales of 70.93 million units, a record in the firm's history, the Wii has easily outsold Sony's PlayStation 3 and Microsoft's Xbox 360 since its 2006 launch.

However, analysts say that as the impact of the Wii fades within a saturated market, Nintendo's next move will determine whether it still has the ability to lead the industry.

"We believe there is more room for us to expand the game playing population. We have to do our best, as an entertainment business, so that we can keep offering good surprises to consumers," Iwata told a news conference.

"Obviously, a game won't be fun only because you made it 3D," he said.

"This is still an uncharted territory that requires us to experience more trials and errors."

The so-called Nintendo 3DS will go on sale this fiscal year, allowing users to see 3D images without the need for special glasses. It will be showcased at the E3 game trade show in June in Los Angeles before its commercial launch.

Iwata's remarks came a day after the Kyoto-based company predicted net profit for this year to March 2011 would fall 12.5 percent.

Nintendo said it expects global sales of Wii consoles to fall to 18 million in the fiscal year, down from 20.5 million in fiscal 2009 and 26 million in fiscal 2008.

"I think 18 million consoles is a fairly ambitious target, considering it has been four years since this device was originally launched," Iwata argued.

"I am not pessimistic about the future. We only realise that selling more in the current business environment will be difficult," he said.

Iwata also said the new console will come with tighter piracy controls, which he said is a growing problem in Asia and Europe.

"What is worrying is that more and more people who wouldn't have engaged in these acts before are now doing it without hesitation," he said. "What worries us is that people finding no value in paying for software," he added.

It's Official, StarCraft II Hits Stores July 27

Don't worry, the clattering cacophony you're hearing is probably just the sound of a million gamers pre-ordering StarCraft II: Wings of Liberty, since it finally has a launch date, and it's sooner than you think.

Sooner, as in July 27, the day Blizzard Entertainment says its space-based real-time game should be available from sea to shining sea, along with Canada, Europe, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, Mexico, Singapore...need I continue? (Okay: Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and regions of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and of all places, Macau - no, I couldn't tell you where that is without looking it up first either.)

Insert the part where Blizzard bigwig Mike Morhaine says they've been waiting to revisit the StarCraft universe for years, that the beta's going great, that they can't wait to welcome all the new players, and all that yada-yada. Really Blizzard, we don't need to know you're excited. That goes without saying. Your job's to tell us something we don't /already/ know.

Like, are you sure the only copy protection scheme you're using in the game is the ol' one-time online activation? Even that's new for you, and I think I speak for most in saying anything more would be a deal-breaker.

And speaking of "most," are you still stoked for this one? Cool with the notion it'll be nothing revolutionary, but rather more of the same, zeroed on competitive multi-play, with spiffier graphics?

23-Year-Old Wins $1 Million Playing Baseball Video Game

Shh, don't tell your kids. Wade McGilberry just won a million dollars playing a video game.

The 23-year-old from Mobile, Ala., accomplished the feat in just an hour and a half, becoming the first to pitch a perfect game in Take-Two Interactive Software Inc.'s "Major League Baseball 2K10." He and his wife, Katy, plan to pay off their mortgage and start a family with the winnings.

"We are trying to be responsible with it. We are simple people," said

Katy McGilberry, also 23.

It wasn’t supposed to be that easy. In fact Wade has not been able to duplicate his feat since March 2, the day he bought the game at its midnight launch and played it after coming home from his job as a records keeper for 401(k) retirement plans.

Take-Two offered the $1 million prize to the first person to pitch a perfect game.

Jason Argent, vice president of marketing at Take-Two’s 2K Sports business, said the company didn’t know how many times the feat has been accomplished in the video game. Certainly no one among the game’s developers has been able to do it.

In a perfect game, no batter from the other team ever scores or reaches a base. That means no hits, no walk and no getting on base because he is hit by a pitch or for any other reason.

It is among the rarest feats in all sports. And "MLB 2K10" tries to simulate real baseball as closely as possible with the player sitting on the couch.

Off the couch, only 18 pitchers have thrown perfect games in the history of Major League Baseball, beginning with Lee Richmond in 1880 and ending with Mark Buehrle in 2009.

"We knew it would be difficult but not impossible," Argent said.

McGilberry said that when he bought the game, his wife suggested that he take the day off work so he could get a head start on the competition.

"I thought about it (and) the responsible thing to do was to go to work," he said. When he came home, he set up a video recording, started playing and achieved the perfect game after "five or six attempts."

Argent said Take-Two has received a handful of submissions after McGilberry, but they haven’t been verified yet. He said the contest helped sales of the game.

McGilberry agreed.

"I think it’s really good publicity," he said. "I wouldn’t have bought the game if not for that."

=~=~=~=

A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Cybersecurity Summit Kicks Off with Calls to Action

Securing cyberspace needs more public-private cooperation and a greater ability to identify and punish perpetrators, officials and business leaders said as a conference got underway.

"We have an incredibly threatening environment out there right now," US Homeland Security Deputy Undersecretary Philip Reitinger said at a dinner kicking off the first World Cybersecurity Summit in Dallas Monday.

"If we let our attention waver for a second we're going to be in a world of hurt," Reitinger said, calling for a sustained focus on cybersecurity and not just "Band-Aids."

Udo Helmbrecht, executive director of the European Network and Information Security Agency, said it was the "responsibility of governments to make a legal framework" to help tackle threats in cyberspace.

"We need to see that it's a global threat," Helmbrecht said, that requires a "global approach."

The Worldwide Cybersecurity Summit, hosted by the EastWest Institute think tank, features three days of discussions on ways to protect the world's digital infrastructure from electronic threats.

Some 400 government officials, business leaders and cybersecurity experts from China, France, Germany, India, Russia, the United States and three dozen other countries are attending the gathering, which is being held in the wake of cyberattacks on Google which the Internet giant said originated in China.

"Technology is definitely outpacing the creation of law and policies," said Kamlesh Bajaj, chief executive of the Data Security Council of India.

"If you look at global cyberattacks, many of them remain unresolved," Bajaj said. "The law enforcement effort leaves much to be desired.

"The Internet is said to be the perfect platform for plausible deniability," Bajaj continued. "Attribution is a major problem. This problem has to be solved and it's an international problem."

Michael Dell, chairman and chief executive of US computer giant Dell, agreed that the ability of cyber criminals and others to easily hide their tracks on the Web was a major problem and one that needs to be addressed.

"We have an enormous number of bad actors who are able to be completely anonymous," he said. "Can you think of any secure system where people can operate anonymously?"

"These are important questions for governments and societies to answer," Dell said. "But I think ultimately if you have a perpetuation of anonymous actors and an increasingly pervasive set of systems that are critical to infrastructure and commerce and everything else in the world this is a bad accomodation."

Dell also said governments and businesses will need to work together. "It's not just the private sector - we need all parties to be involved in this," he said.

Without identifying specific countries, Dell added that "those nations

that don’t pursue these issues aggressively may find themselves as less desirable locations to do business or to do business with."

Reitinger said recognition was needed that "we’re trying to do is run our economy, our critical services, on an Internet ecosystem that is fundamentally insecure."

"That doesn’t mean it’s not great, that it doesn’t give us a lot of benefits but it wasn’t designed to give us the security we need," he said.

"It’s important not to demonize the technology," Reitinger cautioned. "The vast majority of the people using the Internet are good people, it’s just too hard to secure yourself and too hard to protect your family.

"We need both public-private partnerships and advanced technology to make that easier to do," the US Homeland Security official said.

Is There Really A Cyberwar? Term Might Be Misused

Is there really a "cyberwar" going on? Some officials and computer security companies say yes, arguing that armies of hackers are stealing online secrets and using the Internet to attack infrastructure such as power grids.

However, some security analysts said at a conference this week that "cyberwarfare" is such a broadly used term that it might be hurting efforts by countries to agree how to cooperate on Internet security.

For instance, last month the United Nations rejected a Russian proposal for a new treaty on cybercrime. That highlighted a schism with the U.S. and European countries, which support a 2001 treaty that Russia claims gives foreign governments too much leeway to electronically pursue criminals across borders.

"Lots of times, there’s confusion in these treaty negotiations because of lack of clarity about which problems they’re trying to solve," said Scott Charney, vice president of Microsoft Corp.’s Trustworthy Computing Group, before a speech at the Worldwide Cybersecurity Summit.

The conference was sponsored by the EastWest Institute think tank and assembled about 400 security officials and industry executives from dozens of countries.

Cyberwar is a catchall phrase: It’s often used to refer to everything from purely financial crimes to computer attacks that could kill people by blowing up an oil pipeline. Last year came revelations that spies had hacked into the U.S. electric grid and left behind computer programs that would let them disrupt service.

Bruce Schneier, chief security technology officer at British telecommunications operator BT and an influential security blogger, noted that attacks last summer that knocked out service to government Web sites in the United States and South Korea - and were suspected but never proven to have originated in North Korea - were also widely called acts of cyberwar, even though they were essentially harmless.

The White House’s cybersecurity coordinator, Howard Schmidt, has called

"cyberwar" an inaccurate metaphor, given that many computer attacks are criminal acts aimed at stealing money.

If the "war" metaphor is problematic, there could be an important consequence. It might shift responsibility onto the government, in the minds of some in private industry, for fighting the attacks. Instead, experts at the Dallas summit said, it should be a joint effort, particularly when it comes to control systems for critical infrastructure.

"As soon as you say ‘war,’ people think, ‘That’s a government problem,’" said James Isaak, president of the IEEE Computer Society. "And if that’s not the nature of the problem we’re dealing with, that’s a disservice."

Charney, of Microsoft, believes cyber threats should be better differentiated. He proposes four categories: conventional computer crimes, military espionage, economic espionage and cyberwarfare. That approach, he argues, would make it easier to craft defenses and to discuss international solutions to each problem.

However, even in Charney’s framework, "cyberwarfare" remains tricky to define and deal with. One reason is that the nature of the Internet makes it possible that "a nation-state might well find itself ‘at war’ with a single individual," Charney wrote in a paper accompanying his talk.

As a result, he wrote, new rules for such combat have to be considered.

"If the concern is an electronic Pearl Harbor, perhaps part of the response is an electronic ‘Geneva Convention’ that protects the rights of noncombatants."

FCC To Impose Some New Regulations on Broadband

Federal regulators plan to impose some additional rules on broadband providers to ensure the government has authority to move ahead with a sweeping plan to bring high-speed connections to all Americans.

Regulators also want to ensure they have jurisdiction to impose so-called "network neutrality" rules requiring phone and cable companies to give equal treatment to all Internet traffic flowing over their broadband networks.

Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genachowski on Thursday plans to lay out a roadmap for regulating broadband. This step has been eagerly anticipated since a federal court ruling last month cast doubt on the agency’s authority over high-speed Internet access.

The FCC now regulates broadband as a lightly regulated "information service" and had maintained that this gave it legal authority to act on its national broadband plan, which it released in March, and to mandate net neutrality. But the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia rejected this argument.

Since then, the FCC has been trying to decide whether to reclassify broadband as a more heavily regulated telecommunications service, which would be subject to "common carrier" obligations to share networks and treat all traffic equally.

Late Wednesday, the agency said it will seek a "third way" approach that strikes a balance between "weak" rules for information services and "needlessly burdensome" rules for telecommunications services. This approach, the FCC said, would apply a "small handful" of telecommunications regulations on broadband providers and would include "meaningful boundaries to guard against regulatory overreach."

The commission is trying to craft a compromise that will satisfy big phone and cable companies that strongly oppose any additional rules, and public interest groups that have been calling on the agency to regulate broadband as a traditional telecommunications service.

The FCC said the new approach is also intended to "restore the status quo as it existed prior to the court decision."

No Spying in Pennsylvania School Laptops Case

There’s no evidence a suburban school district used school-issued laptops to spy on students despite its questionable policies and its lack of regard for students’ privacy, according to a report issued Monday by attorneys hired by the district.

Concerns about an online chat captured in a screen shot of a school-issued computer led to public disclosure of the Lower Merion School District’s laptop tracking program, according to the report by the Philadelphia law firm Ballard Spahr, which was presented at a meeting of the school board Monday night. The firm recommended a ban on remote activations of webcams and remote capturing of screen shots from computers issued to students.

Harriton High School student Blake Robbins and his family alleged privacy violations over webcam images taken at home without their knowledge and sued the district, which said it secretly activated the webcams only to find missing laptops but admitted lax policies led it to capture 58,000 images.

The report says Robbins turned in his laptop with a broken screen and was issued a loaner on Oct. 20, but school officials quickly moved to retrieve it due to outstanding insurance fees. So the tracking program was activated from Oct. 20 to Nov. 4 and captured 210 webcam photographs and 218 screen shots, the report said.

Although a technician confirmed on the first day of tracking that the laptop was "now currently online at home," another official in the same department instructed him to keep the tracking on and later told investigators he thought he needed authorization to terminate it, the report said.

On Oct. 30, the report said, a technician saw a computer screen shot that "included an online chat that concerned him." After consulting with a superior, he allowed school officials to look at the images.

Although the school principal said none of the images should be discussed with Robbins or his parents because they involved off-campus activities, Vice Principal Lindy Matsko decided about a week later it was "appropriate to discuss certain seemingly troubling images" with them, the report said.

In the civil lawsuit, Robbins said Matsko approached him and warned that school officials, based on webcam photos, suspected him of selling drugs. Robbins, 15, denies the drug allegation and said Matsko mistook Mike & Ike candies for illicit pills.

Robbins family attorney Mark Haltzman told reporters at the meeting that he and his clients were "thankful that we've been vindicated ... about all the misuse going on," but he added he was concerned that the full story had not yet been revealed.

School district lawyer Henry Hockeimer declined to comment on what was in the online chat or images that concerned school officials, citing the pending litigation. The report notes Robbins "was not disciplined as a result of any images captured from his laptop."

The report says the LANrev TheftTrack system was activated 177 times during the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years but 101 activations involved only the IP address tracking feature and resulted in no captured images.

As of Feb. 23, when the system was shut down, there were 30,564 webcam photographs and 27,428 screen shots in the systems of the district's Information Services department. About 87 percent of the images recovered, however, resulted from failure to deactivate the features on a dozen laptops after they were found or recovered, the report said.

The collection of images stemmed not from an effort to spy on students but from "the district's failure to implement policies, procedures and recordkeeping requirements and the overzealous and questionable use of technology by IS personnel without any apparent regard for privacy considerations or sufficient consultation with administrators," the report said.

The report also criticized leaders and several members of the IS department as "not forthcoming with the Board, administrators and students about what TheftTrack could do and how they used it," citing incidents demonstrating "an unwillingness ... to let anyone outside of the IS Department know about TheftTrack's capabilities."

Many of the photos show students in school, and others show walls or empty or dark rooms. Others, however, show students and family members or other people in their homes and elsewhere, but none contained nudity.

The report said the tracking system was intended to help recover stolen computers and the district used it successfully for that purpose. But it said the district also used the system for missing computers and for unknown purposes and left it activated for long periods in cases "in which there was no longer any possible legitimate reason" for capturing images.

The report faults administrators who had information about the program with not having appreciated the privacy concerns raised.

Competitors Force Down Usage of Internet Explorer

Microsoft may be losing its grip on the Internet browser market. The software behemoth has lost a significant percentage of market share for its Internet Explorer browser according to browser usage reports from

market watchers NetApplications and StatCounter. Their research shows Microsoft’s IE browser holding less than 60 percent of the market share.

"I don’t believe IE’s drop in usage share of 0.7 percent was necessarily significant, but much is being made of IE falling below 60 percent for the first time since it became the market leader," said Vincent Vizzaccaro, executive vice president of marketing at Net Applications.

Their research indicates usage of the Microsoft IE browser fell from 77.63 percent in April 2008 to 67.77 percent in April 2009. Since June 2009, Internet Explorer has seen a decrease in market share each consecutive month. April was no different and Microsoft’s IE fell to 59.95 percent.

Competitors, on the other hand, including Google Chrome and Apple Safari saw an increase in market share during the same period.

Firefox has a hold on just under one quarter of the market with 24.59 percent market penetration, according to NetApplications. Google Chrome ranked third with 6.73 percent, a .6 percent increase from last month. Apple Safari came in fourth, with 4.72 percent, a .07 percent increase from the previous month.

Back in the day, Internet Explorer was the aggressor - grabbing more than 90 percent of the market from Netscape, between 1996 and 2002. Since then, however, it has faced growing competition and suffered a slow decline in usage since 2003, according to Vizzaccaro.

That decline continued when Google launched Chrome in September 2008, grabbing 1 percent of the global browser market in just one day, according to StatCounter.

Microsoft did not address the decline in overall Internet Explorer usage, but did provide information on how its most recent browser, IE8 has fared.

"According to Net Applications, for the month of April, Internet Explorer 8 had the highest growth rate across all users worldwide, with 1.08 percent growth as compared with Chrome at 0.60 percent growth," said Brandon LeBlanc, a Microsoft spokesperson.

Microsoft suffered another competitive blow in December 2009, when the European Commission forced Microsoft to make a choice screen available for users of Windows XP, Vista and Windows 7.

The choice screen would enable European users of Windows to have a choice in which browser they used. In addition to IE, users could choose between 11 different browsers including Safari, Chrome and Firefox, to name a few.

Microsoft began offering the choice screen in March of this year, and is committed to doing so for five years. Also in compliance with the EC’s decision, computer manufacturers can install competing browsers on Windows PCs, instead of, or in addition to, IE.

"In the EU where the browser ballot screen is deployed, Internet Explorer 8 also fared well, growing 0.28 percent month over month, on par with the growth rate of Firefox," LeBlanc said.

While IE has lost some of its strong hold on the market, observers

predict that Microsoft will turn things around.

"Facing serious competition from both Firefox and now Chrome, Microsoft has dedicated more resources to IE recently, and I'm curious to see if IE9 can turn around the market share losses when it comes out," Vizzaccaro said.

Browser Battle Between Microsoft and Google Intensifies

The browser war between Microsoft and Google has intensified. The software and Internet search giants are going head-to-head in attracting and keeping users of their popular Internet browsers.

Microsoft, which has dominated the browser market for years, is quickly losing market share to Google's Chrome browser. That was made clear when Microsoft's share of the browser market fell below 60 percent in April, while Chrome's share increased to nearly 25 percent.

The battle between the two grew stronger on Tuesday when Google shared new features of its browser, Chrome 5 beta for Windows, Mac and Linux. The release of Chrome 5 beta came just six weeks after Microsoft provided developers with a sneak peek at Internet Explorer 9 touting some its new features.

Both companies are touting the new preview and beta versions' speed. Google Chrome 5 beta release boasts the best speed to date, according to Mads Ager, a Google software engineer. It also provides a 30 percent improvement on the Chrome's JavaScript engine (V8) and 35 percent improvement over the previous release in code compression, 3D ray tracing, and cryptography bemchmark testing.

Improvements in speed also means users will be able experience web pages load at 2,700 frames per second, a faster rate than what competitors, Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, Opera Software's Opera and IE offer.

While a speedy browser is a must to Internet users, it is not the differentiating feature.

Consumers and developers are seeking support for the multiple applications that will run on the browsers.

At the core of the Chrome 5 beta are new HTML5 features including Geolocation APIs, App Cache, and drag and drop capabilities, according to the company. Also included for the first time is an integrated Adobe Flash Player plug-in, which enables users to browse secure, rich web sites. The auto-update mechanism in Chrome will also enable users to add feature updates to Flash Player.

Google is also touting the ease of use of Chrome 5 beta. The browser has fewer options and menus to configure. Still, Chrome enables users to synchronize not only bookmarks but browser preferences including startup settings, language, homepage and themes.

In this first build of IE9, Microsoft has included GPU-powered HTML5 features and support along with built-in developer tools. And XML formats for scalable vector graphics (SVG) have been included despite Microsoft's preference for its own Silverlight plug-in. Also included

are Cascading Style Sheets 3 (CSS3) and Document Object Model (DOM).

While Microsoft has pushed to meet several standards with IE9, it hasn't reached 100 percent in the Acid3 markup test. The Acid3 test is a test page created by the Web Standards Project. The page checks how well or how poorly a web browser supports specific web standards such as DOM and JavaScript.

Having speed and support is great for consumers, but one major feature that is a must is browser security. Versions of Google Chrome have had great success so far, while several early versions of Internet Explorer have been taken down by hackers. Microsoft has stepped up its security efforts with more recent versions.

Recently, however, hackers, competing in the CanSecWest hacker conference, took down IE8 on Windows 7 , but had a difficult time taking down Google Chrome 4 after Google reportedly patched a few security holes days before the contest.

Consumer Reports: Social Networking Poses Serious Risks

In case you aren't already convinced, what you post on your favorite social network could come back to haunt you - in the form of cybercrime victimization. In fact, 9 percent of social network users experienced some form of abuse within the past year, such as malware infections, scams, identity theft or harassment, according to Consumer Reports.

With social networking use nearly doubling in the past year alone, opportunities for online crime are also expanding. In fact, according to Consumer Reports' latest "State of the Net" survey, 52 percent of adult social network users have posted personal information such as their full birth date. This is behavior, the magazine says, that increases the risk of victimization.

"Many people use social networking sites to share personal information and photos with their friends quickly and easily," said Jeff Fox, technology editor for Consumer Reports. "However there are serious risks involved which can be lessened by using privacy controls offered by the sites."

Despite media attention over the risk of sharing personal information on social networks, Consumer Reports' survey reveals that 38 percent of users post information such as a full birth date - month, date, and year.

Another 21 percent post photos of children, 13 percent post children's names, and 8 percent post home street address. People who do these things are especially vulnerable to becoming victims of costly abuse. Consumer Reports estimates that Americans have lost $4.5 billion over the past two years and including replacing 2.1 million computers compromised by malware.

As Current Analysis analyst Brad Shimmin sees it, the survey confirms that most people who are using social networking tools are providing too much information and are unaware of how to protect themselves.

"The onus falls on consumers, and in a way it should; but the vendors that provide these social networks should do their best to make them

safe haven at the outset," Shimmin said. "They should start with an opt-in rather than an opt-out for information sharing. I know that runs counter to what a lot of social networking communities are trying to accomplish in growing use and advertisements."

Consumer Reports offers some tips on avoiding cybercrime victimization on social networks, such as using stronger passwords. The magazine recommends avoiding simple names or words that can be found in the dictionary and mixing upper and lower case letters with numbers and symbols. Also, by avoiding listing the full birth date consumers can help ward off identity thieves.

Privacy controls are also important. Consumer Reports points out that Facebook users can limit access for almost everything that is posted on a profile. Posting children's names in captions and tags, for example, can be risky. Consumers can also avoid being found in search engines using privacy controls.

Users should also avoid mentioning when they will be away from home. Finally, permitting young people to use Facebook without supervision can be dangerous because they may post sensitive information. Consumer Reports recommends monitoring your child's behavior as well as your own on social networks.

Consumer Reports: Social Networking Poses Serious Risks

In case you aren't already convinced, what you post on your favorite social network could come back to haunt you - in the form of cybercrime victimization. In fact, 9 percent of social network users experienced some form of abuse within the past year, such as malware infections, scams, identity theft or harassment, according to Consumer Reports.

With social networking use nearly doubling in the past year alone, opportunities for online crime are also expanding. In fact, according to Consumer Reports' latest "State of the Net" survey, 52 percent of adult social network users have posted personal information such as their full birth date. This is behavior, the magazine says, that increases the risk of victimization.

"Many people use social networking sites to share personal information and photos with their friends quickly and easily," said Jeff Fox, technology editor for Consumer Reports. "However there are serious risks involved which can be lessened by using privacy controls offered by the sites."

Despite media attention over the risk of sharing personal information on social networks, Consumer Reports' survey reveals that 38 percent of users post information such as a full birth date - month, date, and year.

Another 21 percent post photos of children, 13 percent post children's names, and 8 percent post home street address. People who do these things are especially vulnerable to becoming victims of costly abuse. Consumer Reports estimates that Americans have lost $4.5 billion over the past two years and including replacing 2.1 million computers compromised by malware.

As Current Analysis analyst Brad Shimmin sees it, the survey confirms

that most people who are using social networking tools are providing too much information and are unaware of how to protect themselves.

"The onus falls on consumers, and in a way it should; but the vendors that provide these social networks should do their best to make them safe haven at the outset," Shimmin said. "They should start with an opt-in rather than an opt-out for information sharing. I know that runs counter to what a lot of social networking communities are trying to accomplish in growing use and advertisements."

Consumer Reports offers some tips on avoiding cybercrime victimization on social networks, such as using stronger passwords. The magazine recommends avoiding simple names or words that can be found in the dictionary and mixing upper and lower case letters with numbers and symbols. Also, by avoiding listing the full birth date consumers can help ward off identity thieves.

Privacy controls are also important. Consumer Reports points out that Facebook users can limit access for almost everything that is posted on a profile. Posting children's names in captions and tags, for example, can be risky. Consumers can also avoid being found in search engines using privacy controls.

Users should also avoid mentioning when they will be away from home. Finally, permitting young people to use Facebook without supervision can be dangerous because they may post sensitive information. Consumer Reports recommends monitoring your child's behavior as well as your own on social networks.

Comments Sought on .XXX Domain Debate

In 2005, ICANN accepted a proposal for the creation of .xxx, a top-level domain aimed at voluntary registration for adult sites. Two years later, the organization reversed the decision. Since then, the matter has been the subject of an expensive court battle.

According to ICM Registry, the firm that originally proposed the TLD, a grand total of $7 million in legal fees has been spent on the fight, $5 million from ICM and $2 million from ICANN. ICM is accusing ICANN of playing politics in the matter - and of just plain stubbornness. "Originally, the decision was politically driven but now for Icann... it is about not wanting to admit they were wrong," ICM chairman Stuart Lawley told the BBC.

A U.S. court rejected ICANN's decision for withdrawal in February of this year. ICANN is leaving the matter open to public debate until May 10th. A spokesman for the organization told the BBC that it "actively seeks the comments of as many people as possible in our community, on important issues like this one".

Despite Crackdown, Craigslist's Sex Ads Are Thriving

Craigslist has provided people on all sides of prostitution - solo prostitutes, pimps, law enforcement, and customers - a clearinghouse to

advertise and connect. Attorneys General from across the country have worked with Craigslist to clean up the site, but with relatively little success. Now Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal has subpoenaed the company to see exactly what it is or is not doing to deliver on its promises.

"The craigslist brothel business seems booming - belying its promise to fight prostitution," Blumenthal said after issuing the subpoena Monday. "We are asking craigslist for specific answers about steps to screen and stop sex-for-money offers - and whether the company is actually profiting from prostitution ads that it promised the states and public that it would try to block."

Prostitution is generally illegal in the United States and it's illegal for media outlets to facilitate the practice by publishing advertisements. Under the law, the publisher is believed to have the opportunity to read and edit content before publishing it, and thus publishing it is a kind of endorsement, a reiteration of the content. So why can Craigslist offer an "adult services" section of its famed classified services?

Ironically, it's because of the 1996 Communications Decency Act. Although the primary focus of the Act is to shield children from adult content on the Internet, Section 230 of the Act states that any "interactive computer service" is not a publisher of the content that third parties post, and thus is immune from lawsuits or prosecution based on the material its users post.

The immunity provided by the Communications Decency Act is very broad, and although it does not cover criminal activity, it does cover prostitution ads on Craigslist. Thus far, law enforcement has failed in court to pierce Craigslist's immunity.

Just because Craigslist has no legal obligation to prevent prostitution and human trafficking ads on its website, it doesn't mean that the company has acted with indifference to the horrors of those crimes. Indeed, if you go to the adult services section of the site, the first thing you encounter is a warning about adult content and a disclaimer <http://newyork.craigslist.org/cgi-bin/services.cgi?category=ads> that contains a link to report "suspected exploitation of minors and/or human trafficking. More significantly, in 2008, Craigslist agreed to crack down on the ads, and signed a "Joint Statement" with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the Attorneys General of 40 states, led by Connecticut AG Richard Blumenthal, pledging to take several steps to reduce the volume of illegal sex ads on its site. Despite the agreement, the volume of ads and the type of ads on the adult services section didn't seem to change, although some of the photos got less explicit. Ironically, one of the steps Craigslist agreed to take - to start charging users a fee for placing an adult listing - has turned into a major profit engine for the site.

The AGs and Craigslist agreed in 2008 that adult ads shouldn't be free, and that posters of the ads should have to pay by valid credit card. The theory behind the move was that criminals wouldn't want to post an ad for fear of exposing themselves to prosecution. Moreover, Craigslist pledged that all revenues from the ads would go to charity. But then last May, Craigslist doubled the fee for such ads from $5 to $10 and, at the same time, said it would manually review the ads in an effort to better police the site. (Perhaps the increased revenue funded that extra effort? The press release doesn't say.)

In the same press release, Craigslist said it was renaming its "erotic services" section to "adult services" and, as a result of this change, would no longer direct the net profits from the ads to charity as it considered its pledge fulfilled. (Craigslist said it remained committed to its charitable efforts overall.) It’s difficult to determine how much money Craigslist started pocketing from this change, but it’s safe to say it was substantial. It’s estimated that the adult services ads brought in some $36 million in revenue last year - about one-third of Craigslist’s total revenue
for the year.

All of the specific steps Craigslist pledged to take in its agreement with the Attorneys General have apparently proved ineffective. According to law enforcement, ads for prostitution are proliferating and are barely disguised on the site. "The best evidence is thousands of ads that remain on craigslist - skimpily and slickly disguised with code words," said Blumenthal earlier this week.

By issuing a subpoena to the company seeking evidence of all of the web site’s efforts, Blumenthal is trying to determine whether the continued popularity of the ads is due to the ineffectiveness of the measures that Craigslist pledged to take or a lack of follow-through on Craigslist’s part. On its blog, Craigslist dismisses Blumenthal’s move as a publicity stunt, and emphasizes that "craigslist has gone beyond fulfilling its legal obligations, far beyond classifieds industry norms, has more than lived up to any promises it made, and working together with its partners is in fact a leader in the fight against human trafficking and exploitation."

If Craigslist is delivering on all of its promises as claimed, then what? The AGs will have to figure out which measures would be more effective. Even if they figured out which steps would work, without legal leverage, the AGs may not be able to coerce Craigslist to take further steps to police it site.

If Craigslist isn’t following through on its agreement - er, joint statement - the AGs still don’t have much of a leg to stand on. The document doesn’t have any teeth - there’s no enforcement provision, no penalties in it. Given its rock solid immunity, why would Craigslist sign anything truly binding anyway? The most threatening statement Blumenthal could muster in his subpoena press release was "We’re seeking answers, so we can reach legal conclusions. If [Craigslist] is breaking its promises to the public, it may be breaking the law."

With the law likely not on his side even if Craigslist isn’t following through, Blumenthal’s most potent weapon is public shame. And if the subpoenaed records show that despite its promises, Craigslist is doing nothing to stop the sex industry’s use of the web site, shame is well deserved. Nonetheless as a private company it’s not clear that public shame is all that powerful of a weapon.

De-Cluttering Your Digital Life Can Set You Free

We’ve got multiple e-mail accounts, social networks, media streams, blogs, websites, electronic calendars, instant messages, phone contacts, online bills, passwords coming out of our ears and screen after screen after screen of computer stuff to back up, share and sync.

That doesn’t include the virtual reams floating in the ether, enough to fill the Library of Congress more than 40,000 times, said Douglas C. Merrill, former chief information officer for Google, Ph.D. in cognitive science and dude who wants to help us better manage our digital clutter.

"That’s 32 feet of books for every man, woman and child in America. We’re drowning in information," said Merrill, who nearly wrecked his health helping to manage the details of taking Google public.

Merrill, once an information scientist at the Rand Corp., struggled with dyslexia as a kid, so de-cluttering - digital and otherwise - is a huge priority for him, so much that he’s written a book on the subject with James Martin, "Getting Organized in the Google Era."

We all know about clutter offline, but our digital selves have filled up in a huge way, too. We’re suffering, but we can’t dig out or keep up with rapidly changing and proliferating tools. Geeks do. They track products and reviews - and have the time and skills to test them. The rest of us fret and stress.

"I have several e-mail accounts. I have several websites. I’m constantly behind returning phone calls. It’s a good day if the number of unread messages is below 200," said Berit Brogaard, a St. Louis college professor and single mom to a busy 6-year-old whose life also needs to be managed.

Anybody looking for a non-urgent e-mail reply from Brogaard might be waiting awhile. She relies on a few canned e-mail responses that she stashes in Gmail and rolls out when she’s swamped, like this one for close friends:

"Hey there! Miss you. I am insanely busy. Sorry for being so lame. Will fill you in soon."

Merrill, who left Google for the music company EMI, then his own financial startup in Los Angeles, said a good place to begin a digital de-clutter is accepting that our brains are lousy multitaskers, among other bad things. They need all the help they can get in clearing out space, just like our computers and smart phones.

Another good place to start is taking heart in the array and flexibility of today’s tools. He offers these tips, acknowledging there’s no one-size-fits-all answer:

Abandon the notion of "filing" and "folders" as a way to alleviate anxiety over a messy computer desktop, Merrill said. Folders, the paper and digital kind, must be maintained, and your brain must remember what you’ve put in them.

"The problem is we can never find the information we’ve stored, so we wind up with folders and folders we don’t know what to do with," Merrill said. "Search is the new organization. Search can set us free from the clutter of our imperfect minds" by allowing us to get a little messy. No time is lost on meticulously filing and hunting for folders when well-defined searches are used.

Desktop tools don’t have to be fancy or expensive. They’re everywhere, including right there in Windows and operating systems for Macs and other computers. Tools like Google Desktop or Spotlight allow you to search with the same ease you enjoy for the Web. Quicksilver is popular

with geeks.

"The goal is to keep yourself from being overwhelmed emotionally by not making your brain do what it’s not good at. Computers are good at searching. You’re not. They’re good at remembering. You’re not."

You’d think Mr. Google would have no use for paper. Not true.

"I think paper’s great for certain things," Merrill said. "It’s still important."

He uses huge sticky sheets that he plasters on his walls when he’s brainstorming a big idea. They’re easy to move around as his thoughts firm up. He also uses paper for legal and tax documents that could be scanned into electronic files only to be retrieved and printed on demand when lawyers and accountants require hard copy.

The idea of a paperless office has been bounced around for three decades. In the early days, Google itself required employees to submit a trail of paper forms for reimbursement of expenses, Merrill said.

The goal is to be more efficient, so evaluate digital tools versus paper, or digital as a backup to hard copy when trying to decide. Are you looking for storage alone? Do you need to share information with many people at work, or with a small group of trusted loved ones in emergencies? We need wills, contracts and life insurance policies on paper, but should we take the time to scan them for sharing and protection?

For the truly nervous, storing numerous login names and passwords can be done on paper, but since it’s recommended that passwords change substantially at least every six months, that could be time consuming. Merrill suggests e-mailing yourself password hints.

Plenty of software power and browser tools are available for sorting dozens of passwords. The important thing, he said, is to actually change passwords and make the changes substantial.

A paperless real-world desk isn’t realistic at the end of each day, but well organized piles by subject, project or function will do a lot of good to relieve the stress and guilt of walking away from a cluttered work space that looks like a pile of loose ends.

Merrill suggests taking an hour each week to evaluate what’s on your desk, determining what can go, what can be converted to digital, what needs to be in a physical file cabinet and what remains on your to-do list.

Some people swear by hard-copy task management planners, but the Web is full of online apps to do the same. Online to-do apps can be easily updated on the go.

Having several e-mail accounts may be another of your unavoidable realities, but they don’t need to be a source of stress. Use Gmail or smart phones, for instance, to check accounts for you so you’re not constantly jumping from one e-mail server to another.

"Get rid of the wasted effort," Merrill said.

Twitter, Facebook and other social networks mean different things to

different people. They've become a business tool for many but remain entertainment or a way to stay in touch for others.

Either way, many interfaces - like Tweetdeck - exist to integrate our busy social network lives that often have us posting frequent updates or sifting through the output of others.

One that Merrill likes, mostly for Twitter, is Brizzly. It offers support for viewing pictures online, expanding links that have been shortened, for people with multiple Twitter accounts, and includes some features for Facebook as well.

"I don't want to clutter up my life with having to go to Facebook and do this and go to Twitter and do that," Merrill said.

=~=~=~=

Atari Online News, Etc. is a weekly publication covering the entire Atari community. Reprint permission is granted, unless otherwise noted at the beginning of any article, to Atari user groups and not for profit publications only under the following terms: articles must remain unedited and include the issue number and author at the top of each article reprinted. Other reprints granted upon approval of request. Send requests to: dpj@atarinews.org

No issue of Atari Online News, Etc. may be included on any commercial media, nor uploaded or transmitted to any commercial online service or internet site, in whole or in part, by any agent or means, without the expressed consent or permission from the Publisher or Editor of Atari Online News, Etc.

Opinions presented herein are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, or of the publishers. All material herein is believed to be accurate at the time of publishing.